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COUNTRIES ASK CITIZENS TO LEAVE LEBANON AMID WAR FEAR

Many countries including the US, UK and France have asked their citizens to leave Lebanon as soon as possible

The advisories come amid fears of all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah following last week's killings of high-profile Hamas and Hezbollah leaders by Israel

Several Western airlines have suspended flights to Lebanon and other airports in the region. The US urged its citizens to use 'any ticket available' to get out of Lebanon

Amid tensions, Hezbollah said it fired a barrage of rockets at Israel's north late on Saturday night

August 1
India issued an advisory asking its citizens to leave Lebanon

545
people killed in Lebanon since the start of the war in Gaza. At least 115 are civilians | P11

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Bill to overhaul Wakf Act likely on Aug 9 or 12

Govt sources say the move is to bring in more transparency and gender diversity

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ New Delhi

THE Centre plans to bring a bill to overhaul the Wakf Act in the ongoing Budget session of Parliament, government sources said on Sunday. It is learnt that the Cabinet meet held late on Friday evening cleared the Wakf amendment bill. Sources claimed the government's move is in line with demands from the Muslim community itself for reforming the Wakf boards.

The bill, which proposes 38-40 major amendments to the Wakf Act, is likely to be introduced in Parliament either on August 9 or 12 (the last day of the Budget session). In case it could not be introduced in this session, then it would be presented in the next Parliament session, sources told this paper.

With many states gearing up for elections this year and the next, the move could spark heated debates and become a potential political issue for the Opposition.

Among the major changes proposed in the bill is the mandatory registration of all moveable and immoveable properties under Waqf boards with the district collectors concerned. Plus, all registered properties must be uploaded on the Wakf board's portal.

While no official statement has been issued so far, top sources said the bill would be aimed at ensuring "transparency, efficiency and accountability" in the functioning of Waqf boards.

In all, there are 30 Waqf boards functioning across India. "Waqf boards hold huge numbers of moveable and immoveable properties across the country, which are neither documented nor audited with the government machinery. The bill may propose a proper audit and verification of property and assets, declared as owned by the WB in order to ensure transparency," a top government source said in an informal chat with the media here on Sunday.

"The proposed bill is aimed at seeking benefits to poor Muslims, women and children, and ensuring fair participation of women in the boards. The bill is not aimed at grabbing land from Muslims by the government nor is to give such land to non-Muslims," the government source added.

"The benefits of Wakf properties are strictly for the welfare of the community, and not meant for any individuals. The bill will put a check on any such malpractice," remarked a source.

'Unlimited powers'

According to sources, one of the objectives of the bill is to check the "unlimited powers" of Wakf boards, which can even bar plaintiffs from seeking justice from the judiciary.

Also, there are complaints of the boards usurping property by misusing the Wakf Act

People participate in a rally demanding justice for those killed in recent clashes with the security forces | AP

100 KILLED IN DEADLIEST DAY OF B'DESH PROTESTS

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

PROTESTS calling for Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation escalated on Sunday with nearly 100 people killed in fierce clashes between demonstrators and the the ruling party supporters.

The violence took a communal turn with miscreants attacking the temples and houses of Hindus. A Hindu councillor from Rangpur, Kajal Roy, was shot dead. Devotees ran for cover as miscreants stormed ISKCON and Kali temples.

Authorities have cut off mobile internet and an indefinite curfew was imposed at 6 pm.

Among the dead are at least 14 policemen. "It was a bloody Sunday. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are blocked," Professor Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, a political commentator in Bangladesh, told this newspaper.

Many buildings were set ablaze during the protests. This includes the house of Sheikh Sohel, a cousin of Hasina, and the office of Beximco Group, one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh. In the Rajbari district, a statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was vandalised.

"These kinds of protests are unprecedented in Dhaka," a source based in the Bangladesh capital said.

The protesters are demanding that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resign. A call has been sent out to students across the country to participate in a march to Dhaka on Monday. This march was earlier planned for Tuesday.

Hasina, meanwhile, said those protesting are not students, but terrorists. "I appeal to the countrymen to suppress these terrorists with a firm hand," she said. The Bangladesh Army chief vowed to restore normalcy in two days.

Protests began last month over a 30% job quota that critics said favours those loyal to the PM. The Supreme Court last week gave a verdict restricting the quota to 5% but fell short of protesters' demand to quash the quota entirely. Protests resumed on Friday after a brief lull. The protesters have rejected Hasina's offer of talks. P11

Hasina huddles with top security brass

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called a meeting of the National Committee on Security Affairs to review the situation, local media reported. It was attended by the chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force and the police

We would want the students to carve out a future for Bangladesh. A revolution has already begun
Piyali Bhattacharya, exiled Bangladeshi activist

daCunha/AB/966

CID starts investigation into Yadgir PSI's death

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Yadgir, Kalaburagi

A team of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) sleuths arrived at Yadgir on Sunday and took up the investigation into the death of Police Sub-Inspector Parashuram, who died under suspicious circumstances at police quarters on Friday evening.

The CID team, led by DySP Punit, visited the offices of Yadgir DySP and circle inspector and collected information, sources said. Though the police believe that Parashuram died of heart attack, the postmortem report which is expected in 2-3 days will confirm whether he died of heart issues or committed suicide, as alleged by his father. Parashuram was rushed to hospital on Friday night after blood was seen coming out of his mouth and nose, the father has told the police.

Parashuram's wife Shweta has stated in her police complaint, based on which the FIR has been filed, that her husband was being pressurised by Yadgir MLA Chennareddy Tunnur and his son Pampanagouda to pay Rs 30 lakh to continue as PSI in the Yadgir Town police station. Parashuram, who was transferred from Yadgir Town police station to CEN police station, died after attending his farewell party on August 2. CONTINUED ON: P4

THE WALL OF MEMORIES

Former head coach of the Indian cricket team, Rahul Dravid, arrives from the ongoing Paris Olympics to celebrate his mother Pushpa Dravid's decades-long art journey with a curated retrospective exhibition. In a conversation with *CE*, the cricket icon shares his sense of nostalgia | CITY EXPRESS: P1

2 more bodies found, 200 still missing in Wayanad

ARUN M @ Chooralmala (Wayanad)

AMID the continuing search for those missing in the devastating landslides in Wayanad, bodies of eight unidentified victims were laid to rest at a mass burial site at Puthumala near Meppadi on Sunday, the sixth day following the calamity.

Around 30 pits were arranged at a 64-cent burial ground at Harrisons Malayalam Estate in Puthumala. The bodies were buried after official procedures under the Disaster Management Act were completed.

Meanwhile, hopes of finding those still missing in the landslides at Chooralmala and Mundakkai are fading with each passing day. With around 200 people yet to be traced, the state government has initiated a DNA matching process for the unidentified bodies and body parts with the family members of those missing.

Volunteers preparing the graveyard for cremating the unidentified bodies recovered from the landslide-hit areas of Chooralmala and Mundakkai in Wayanad | TP SOORAJ

DNA samples of the unidentified bodies and body parts are being preserved before burial. A medical team will collect blood samples from the relatives of the missing persons to compare with the DNA samples of the unidentified bodies and body parts.

Despite extensive efforts in the landslide-affected areas and along a 40km stretch of river through the forest, only two bodies and 10 body parts were recovered on Sunday.

The official death toll in the calamity stands at 221, including 97 men, 87 women, and 37 children. However, there are reports that the number of deceased could be over 300. On Sunday, the search operations continued at Chooralmala and Mundakkai, with more personnel and equipment being deployed in areas having a higher likelihood of recovering bodies. Advanced radars, drones, and heavy machinery are being used by the rescue teams. Forty teams are conducting search operations across six zones. P5

WAKING UP EARLY

Kodagu identifies 104 landslide-prone areas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Madikeri

EXERCISING caution after massive landslides in Wayanad in Kerala, the Kodagu district administration has identified 104 landslide-prone areas, based on the reports submitted by the Geological Survey of India. Anticipating heavy rainfall this month, the administration has issued notices to 2,995 families located in these vulnerable regions to move to safer areas.

These regions have been identified based on previous disaster reports and surveys. The sensitive and highly sensitive areas were identified and the families to be relocated were finalised. The relocation could happen soon, sources said.

The administration has set up 14 relief centres, where over 200 residents are sheltered. It has also marked the locations to open 95 relief centres in these possible disaster areas.

"Steps will be taken to relocate residents from vulnerable regions depending on the rainfall forecast," said DC Venkat Raja.

The district has received 24% excess rainfall this year and more rain is expected this month.

Kodagu couple lose their son in Wayanad

PRAJNA GR @ Madikeri

UNABLE to find daily wage work in Kodagu due to heavy rain, a woman labourer from Kodagu left for Wayanad nearly three weeks ago. She had taken her son too along as schools in the district had been ordered shut due to incessant rainfall. But tragedy struck the poor family and the woman lost her son when Meppadi in Wayanad district was hit by landslides on Tuesday.

The woman, Kavitha, and her husband Ravi are settled in Kodagu. While Ravi is from Tamil Nadu, Kavitha was born and brought up in Kodagu. The couple have two sons and one daughter. CONTINUED ON: P5

Miracle on Turf: In a corner of Paris, Indian hockey rises from the beyond

ALFRED Tennyson's words aptly surmise the emotional high of the men's hockey team.

The English poet's words "... someone had blundered, Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die, Into the valley of Death, Rode the 10 men..."

It is the Olympics. If India's 3-2 win against Australia was historic, what they did on the blue turf at Yves du Manoir on Sunday was more than just a miracle. It belongs in the realm of fantasy. They now have the chance to upgrade the bronze they had won in Tokyo. With that the romance associated with hockey will grow.

The miracle did not come easy. Two minutes into the second quarter against Great Britain, India were down to ten. What followed the next 43 minutes was a lesson in 'you shall not pass'. India's nine outfielders and PR Sreejesh did the improbable as they held out till the shoot-out where they won 4-2 (1-1 after end of 60 minutes).

By the time it began, GB looked shattered. India were buoyant. Their body language was positive. The entire Indian team yelled and after Rajkumar Pal found the net, the fourth Indian to do so. Just before this, Sreejesh saved from Phil Roper, GB's second miss. From coach Craig Fulton to every single player, they all ran towards the man who stood between India and defeat. Sreejesh. Though exhausted, they still had enough in their bodies to celebrate. Their resilience resulted in one of the greatest escape acts in Olympic history. P13

Indian players celebrate after the shoot-out win over Great Britain | AP